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# THE BRIDE OF CHRIST



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**ST. CATHARINE.**  
**By Titian.**

# THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

A STUDY IN  
CHRISTIAN LEGEND LORE

BY

PAUL CARUS  
II

ILLUSTRATED



CHICAGO  
THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING COMPANY.

LONDON AGENTS  
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
<b>THE DIVINE BRIDEGROOM.</b>	
Jesus and the Christ-Conception. ....	1
The Saviour as a Bridegroom. ....	5
Marduk and Christ. ....	6
The Monument of Boghaz-Köi. ....	8
The Marriage of the Lamb. ....	10
Sophia and Mary. ....	13
The Church as Bride. ....	14
Church Hymns. ....	17
Womanhood Sanctified. ....	19
Nuns. ....	22
<b>OLYMPIAN MARRIAGES.</b>	
The Spirit of Greek Mythology. ....	25
The Difficulties of Polytheism. ....	28
Nativity Legends ....	33
Marriages Between the Races of Gods and Men. ....	37
Peleus and Thetis. ....	44
Legends of Rome. ....	49
<b>ST. CATHARINE.</b>	
The Bride of Christ. ....	53
St. Catharine of Siena. ....	54
St. Catharine of Alexandria. ....	57
Mielot's Account. ....	63
The Version of the Roman Breviary. ....	72
Pagan Analogies. ....	81
<b>ST. CATHARINE IN ART.</b>	
Poetic Symbolism. ....	84
The National Gallery of London. ....	89
Artists of the German Schools. ....	92
A Memling Breviary. ....	103
<b>CONCLUSION. ....</b>	<b>108</b>



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
St. Catharine. By Titian. ( <i>Frontispiece.</i> )	1
The Mystic Marriage. By Previtali. ....	2
The Mystic Marriage. By Maratti. ....	2
The Mystic Marriage. By Tintoretto. ....	3
The Mystic Marriage (Cadiz). By Murillo. ....	4
The Mystic Marriage. By Giuliano Bugiardini. ....	6
The Monument from Boghaz-Köi. ....	8
Wedding Procession of Dionysus and Ariadne. ....	9
Coin of Alexander. ....	11
Coin of Lysimachus. ....	11
Coin of Ptolemy. ....	11
The Marriage of the Lamb. By Schnorr von Karolsfeld. ....	12
The Mystic Marriage (Rome). By Murillo. ....	13
The Mystic Marriage. By Correggio. ....	15
The Mystic Marriage. By Parmigianino. ....	16
The Mystic Marriage. By Paul Veronese. ....	20
The Mystic Marriage. By Luini. ....	21
A Pagan Nun. ....	23
Marriage of Zeus and Hera (A Pompeian Fresco). ....	26
Marriage of Zeus and Hera (Outline drawing of the preceding). ....	27
Hera as a Bride (Detail). ....	28
Ares and Aphrodite. ....	29
Perseus Rescuing Andromeda. ....	30
Rhea Welcoming Kronos. ....	33
Rhea's Deception. ....	34
Hermes Saving the Child Dionysus. ....	35
Marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne. ....	36
Wedding of Heracles and Hebe. ....	38
Eros and Psyche Together with the Good Shepherd. ....	40
Orpheus and Euridice. ....	41
Marriage of Poseidon and Amymone. ....	43

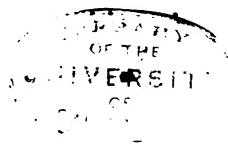
	PAGE
Peleus Wrestles with Thetis. ....	44
Peleus and Thetis (Amphora from Rhodes). ....	45
Aphrodite Persuading Helen. ....	46
The Portland Vase (Representing the Marriage of Thetis). ....	47
The Fran <sup>co</sup> is Vase (Representing the Marriage of Thetis). ....	48
Mars and Rea Silvia. ....	50
The She Wolf of the Roman Capitol. ....	51
Venus and Anchises. ....	52
Marriage of the Catharines. By Borgognone. ....	54
The Marriage of St. Catharine. By Fra Bartolommeo. ....	55
St. Catharine of Siena. By Lorenzo da San Severino. ....	56
St. Catharine of Alexandria. By Ghirlandajo. ....	58
St. Catharine of Alexandria. By Andrea del Sarto. ....	59
The Holy Family and St. Catharine. By Luca di Signorelli. ....	60
The Holy Family and St. Catharine. By Giacobo Francia. ....	61
St. Catharine of Alexandria. By Carlo Dolci. ....	62
Madonna and Saints. By "Master of St. Severin." ....	64
The Virgin Enthroned (Sienese of 15th century). ....	65
The Marriage of St. Catharine. From Mielot's <i>Vie de Ste. Catherine</i> . ....	67
St. Catharine Teaching. By Masolino. ....	69
St. Catharine's Deliverance. From Mielot's <i>Vie de Ste. Catherine</i> . ....	71
St. Catharine in a Controversy. By Pinturicchio. ....	73
The Martyrdom of St. Catharine. By Luini. ....	74, 75
St. Catharine's Martyrdom. From <i>Little Pictorial Lives of the Saints</i> . ....	76
Burial of St. Catharine. By Luini. ....	77
St. Catharine Liberated by Angels. By Masolino. ....	78
St. Catharine (Detail from above). ....	79
Madonna and Child, with Saints Barbara and Catharine. ....	80
St. Catharine. By Fra Angelico. ....	82
The Marriage of St. Catharine. By David (Gheeraert). ....	84
The Marriage of St. Catharine. By Hans Memling. ....	85
St. Catharine. By Raphael. ....	86
St. Catharine with the Evangelists Matthew and John. By "Master Stephen." ....	87
St. Catharine. By Pinturicchio. ....	88
St. Catharine. By Carlo Crivelli. ....	89
St. Catharine (Umbrian School). ....	89

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

vii

	PAGE
Scenes from the Life of St. Catharine. By "Master of the St. George Legends."	90, 91
The Holy Family and Saints Catharine and Barbara. By "Master of the Holy Family."	92
St. Catharine (Detail from above).	93
Madonna and Child Together with Female Saints and Donor's Family. By "Master of the Life of Mary."	94
The Glorification of the Virgin (Unknown).	95
Madonna and Saints. By "Master Wilhelm."	96
St. Catharine. By "Master Wilhelm."	97
St. Catharine. By Jan Van Eyck.	97
Saints Catharine, Hubert, and Quirinus. By Stephen Lothener.	98
St. Catharine (Westphalian School).	99
St. Catharine. By "Master of the Life of Mary."	99
St. Catharine. By Schongauer.	100, 101
St. Catharine's Deliverance. By Dürer.	102
St. Catharine (From a Memling Breviary).	104, 105
A Page of Illuminated Text (From a Memling Breviary).	106





## THE DIVINE BRIDEGROOM.

### JESUS AND THE CHRIST-CONCEPTION.

If a distinction is made between Jesus and Christ, Jesus denotes the man, while by Christ we mean the office and dignity claimed for Jesus. Jesus lived about nineteen hun-



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Previtali (15th cent.). In the Church of San Giobbe at Venice.

dred years ago in Palestine, and he was by birth a Galilean, while Christ is the God-man, the realization of human perfection, the highest ideal of religion.

The basis of our Christ-conception is, first, the Gospel tradition of the character of Jesus, and for certain reasons (into which we need not enter here) we deem the nucleus of it, mainly represented by Mark, historical. There have



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Maratti, 1625-1713.

been incorporated into the Gospel stories, however, certain traits of Christ-conceptions which are older than Jesus. They are ancient reminiscences of saviours, of divine he-

roes, of God-men, of mediators between God and mankind, of God-incarnations, and from the beginning these notions



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.  
By Tintoretto, 1518-1594. In the Ducal Palace at Venice.

crystallized with great exuberance around the figure of the Crucified.

Now it is a characteristic feature of some pagan saviours that when they have conquered the enemy they enter in triumphal procession and celebrate their marriage feast.



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Murillo, 1618-1682. (Cadiz.) This was the artist's last production.

This is especially the case of Bel Marduk,<sup>1</sup> the main mediator god of ancient Babylon, who in the faith of his worshipers bears, in many respects, a close resemblance to the Christ of Christianity.

## THE SAVIOUR AS A BRIDEGROOM.

Since Christianity was tinged with ascetic sentiments especially in the beginning, the marriage idea in connection with Christ has been considerably dimmed, but it was not entirely lost sight of. Not only have we references in the parables of Jesus which state that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a marriage (Matt. xxii. 1-14) and men's expectancy of salvation is compared to the wisdom or folly of virgins who wait for the bridegroom (Matt. xxv. 1-13),<sup>2</sup> but St. Paul calls the Church definitely the "Bride of Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 24-32), and St. John the Divine repeatedly speaks of the bride and the marriage of the Lamb. The bride is Jerusalem representing the Church and the Lamb is Christ.

St. John the Baptist, when announcing Jesus, calls himself the friend of the bridegroom, but he is not the Christ. John declares "he that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John iii. 29), implying therewith that Jesus and not he himself is the Messiah, and Christ does not request his disciples to fast, as stated by Mark<sup>3</sup> (ii. 19):

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."

<sup>1</sup> See Radau, *Bel, the Christ of Ancient Times*. Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co., 1908.

<sup>2</sup> See also Luke xii. 35, 36.

<sup>3</sup> The parallel passages are Matt. ix. 15, and Luke v. 34.

## MARDUK AND CHRIST.

These several scattered references to the Saviour as a bridegroom appear in a new light when compared to the bridal festivities of pagan saviours which were celebrated



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Giuliano Bugiardini, 1475-1554. In the Pinapothek at Bologna.

in the ancient Orient and were also not unknown in Egypt and in Greece. We can not doubt that here, as in many

other customs, Babylonian, Egyptian, Syrian, and Greek traditions must have exercised a very powerful influence upon the formation of religious ideas not only of the Jews but also and even more of Christianity.

Marduk may be compared to Christ in more than one respect. He is the beloved Son of Ea, the God of Heaven, by whom he is addressed in these words:

"My son, what is it that thou dost not know! What then could I still teach thee! What I know thou knowest also!"<sup>4</sup>

Marduk, the conqueror of Tiamat, the monster of the deep, is Ea's vicegerent on earth; he is king of gods and men, and he is the incarnation of divine wisdom. He is the saviour god, and the saviour king with whose arrival the Golden Age begins on earth. But the most remarkable parallelism obtains between Marduk and Christ in that both rise from the dead and the festival of resurrection is celebrated for each in the beginning of the natural year in the spring.

Little is known of Marduk's death; but that he died and descended into the nether world appears from the fact that he bears the name *Bel nubatti*, "Lord of lamentation" (or as Schrader translates it, "*Herr der [Toten-]Klage*"), suggesting the assumption that his death was lamented in a similar way as the death of Adonis or other vegetation and solar deities. We further know from Greek sources<sup>5</sup> (Ctesias XXIX, 21 f.: Ælian, *Var. Hist.*) that Xerxes opened and plundered the tomb of Bel, which presumably means the transference of the god's statue from Babylon to some other place, and proves that the temple of Bel contained the tomb of the god, thus implying that there was an annual day of lamentation for his death.

The Easter festival of Bel coincides with the New

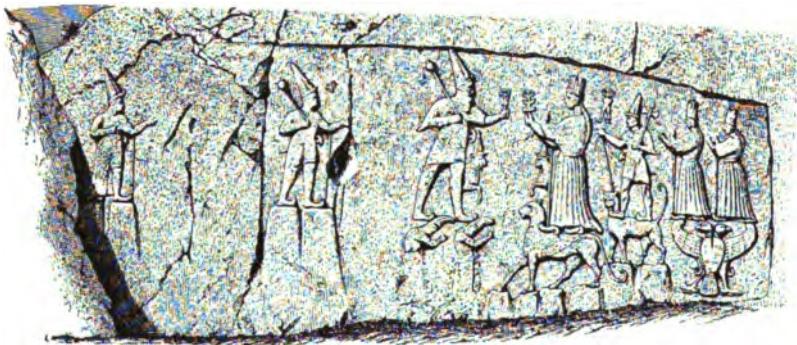
<sup>4</sup> Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, pp. 374.

<sup>5</sup> Schrader, *ibid.*

Year's day of Babylon, the first of Nisan, and was celebrated under the name *tabû*, which Jensen translates by "resurrection" in the sense of the Christian Epiphany. It was the main religious festival of Babylon and in a description of it we read of Marduk: *ihiš ana hadassutu*, "he hastens to wedlock." (Schrader translates, "*er eilte zur Brautschafft.*") His bride is called Tsarpanitu, which is commonly assumed to be a cognomen of Istar.

#### THE MONUMENT OF BOGHAZ-KÖI.

Near the hamlet Boghaz-Köi in Asia Minor have been discovered extensive monuments indicating that it was the



THE MONUMENT FROM BOGHAZ-KÖI.

site of a large city which can be easily identified with the ancient capital of Phrygia, and we here reproduce one most remarkable *bas relief* of a mythological character which has been the subject of much discussion among archæologists. We have no inscription that might assist us in explaining the several figures, but the scene here represented needs but a description to find its correct interpretation.

We see before us two groups of divinities meeting each other. From the left arrives a god crowned with a high tiara, holding in his right hand a club, and in his

left an emblem possibly symbolizing a flower or a fruit. At his side leaps the animal that is sacred to him (a ram or a bull). He steps upon the bowed heads of his conquered enemies. He is followed by other figures dressed exactly like him only smaller in size. We can not be mistaken if we regard them as other divinities of less significance. It is not impossible that the original number of the whole escort of gods was four, and that we have here before us the victorious saviour god, analogous to Marduk of Babylon, attended by the guardians of the four corners of the world. It appears that two of them have been broken off, for the two gaps are just large enough to accommodate the missing figures.



WEDDING PROCESSION OF DIONYSUS AND ARIADNE.  
A Sarcophagus in the Glyptothek at Munich.

From the opposite direction comes the goddess Istara (or Astarte) standing upon a lioness and holding in her hand the same flowerlike emblem which the god offers her. She is accompanied by an animal, apparently a cow, and she is followed by one young man with a staff and a war axe, standing (like her) upon a wild animal,—a lioness, a leopard, or some similar creature. Behind him come two female divinities borne on a double headed eagle, and raising their hands in the same attitude of greeting as their mistress.

It is difficult to offer a simpler explanation than that we are here confronted with an illustration of the marriage feast of the saviour god of whom after the conquest of his

enemies, the ancient monuments of Babylon declare that he celebrated his wedding.

It is the mythological scene celebrated in annual festivals and not less dear to the ancient pagans who believed in the stories of their gods, than Easter is now to Christians.

Similar festivals have been celebrated in other cults, e. g., the wedding of Zeus with Hera, of Dionysus with Ariadne, of Eros with Psyche, etc.

The marriage feasts of the several gods were always days of rejoicing and the artists of classical antiquity have taken the opportunity to illustrate them in innumerable monuments of art.

Bel Marduk was replaced among the Persians by Mithras who succeeded to all the honors of the Babylonian god, and in the days of Christianity Christ replaced both.

#### THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

In the book of Revelations, which preserves a more primitive conception of Christ than the Gospels and contains more reminiscences of ancient Babylon (as Gunkel has proved) than any other book in the New Testament, we read of the marriage feast of the Lamb (xix. 7-9):

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

We must remember that the lamb is the New Testament emblem for Christ corresponding to Bel Marduk whose symbol is the ram or male sheep, corresponding also to the ram of Amen Ra. Alexander the Great had a coin

struck which pictured him with the horns of a wether announcing himself as the son of the god Ammon in order to indicate that he was the expected king with whose ar-



COIN OF ALEXANDER.

rival the Golden Age would begin. Other Eastern monarchs followed his example. The word "lamb" in Reve-



COIN OF LYSIMACHUS.

lations translates the Greek *ἀρίον* which means a little ram conveying the idea of a child, born to be the leader



COIN OF PTOLEMY.

of his people. Our modern idea of a lamb as the symbol of innocence and submission to the butcher is absolutely mis-

sing in the original conception of the young ram, and we dare say that the intention of the word is almost the reverse.

Further down, the bride of the lamb is interpreted to be the new city of Jerusalem, which in Christianity again symbolizes the Church. We read<sup>6</sup>:

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming



THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

By Schnorr von Karolsfeld.

down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

That the interpretation is later than the original idea of a bride is quite obvious in the Fourth Book of Esdras, where the prophet encounters a woman and listens to the tale of her tribulation. The woman disappears and in her

<sup>6</sup> Compare also xxi. 9.

place he beholds a city, whereupon the angel Uriel explains the vision, saying (4 Esdras x. 44): "The woman which thou hast seen is Sion, which thou now seest before thee as a builded city."

## SOPHIA AND MARY.

A similar idea is found in the Wisdom of Solomon where wisdom is personified as Sophia and is spoken of as



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.  
By Murillo (1618-1682). In the Vatican.

having existed before the world, taking the place of the Holy Ghost in Christianity. We read for instance in chapters vii and viii:

"For wisdom is more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pure-

ness.... And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom.... Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things.... In that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility: yea, the Lord of all things himself loved her. For she is privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of God, and a lover of his works."

Sophia retains this place which she holds in the Old Testament Apocrypha with the Gnostics, and as we know from a fragment of the Gospel According to the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost is regarded as the wife of God the Father, for there Jesus uses the expression "My Mother the Holy Ghost," as quoted by Epiphanius (*Haeres*, LXII, 2).

The idea of a trinity as God,—father, mother and son—faded away quickly during the early development of the Christian dogma, and it seems that the replacement of the word *logos* for *sophia* helped to obliterate the idea that the second person of the deity was female. The change was also favored by the fact that while *ruah*, the Hebrew term for spirit, is feminine, the Greek term *pneuma* is neuter.

#### THE CHURCH AS BRIDE.

The notion that Christ as the Viceroy of God on earth had a bride remained constantly in the minds of the people as much as the idea of the anti-Christ. The world was regarded as divided into two camps, the kingdom of God governed by Christ, identified with the Church under the leadership of the Pope, and the empire of unbelief which composed the entire pagan world and also the heretics of Christianity. In the mystic literature these ideas turn up again and again, and during the Middle Ages the bride of

Christ is usually thought to be the Church, while among Protestants it is generally the soul. As an instance we will quote a passage from Hildegard of Bingen, an abbess and a prophetess who saw visions quite similar to those of St. John the Divine in the Revelations. She herself was



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.  
By Correggio, 1494-1534. In the Louvre.

almost illiterate, but her adviser, presumably her father confessor, reduced her prophecies to an approximately correct Latin and had them published.

In 1147-48 Pope Eugene IV happened to visit the Abbot of Treves. There he met Henry, Archbishop of Mentz,



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.  
By Parmigianino, 1504-1540. In the Pinacoteca at Parma.



who through Kuno, the Abbot of Disibodenberg, had become deeply impressed with the spiritual profundity and genuineness of Hildegard's visions, and when a report of them was submitted to the Council of Treves, the Pope, urged by the Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, who happened to be present, readily acknowledged the divine origin of Hildegard's revelations and encouraged her in a personal letter to continue her writings.<sup>7</sup>

We quote a passage<sup>8</sup> from one of the prophecies recorded in the book *Scivias* ascribed to the Abbess Hildegard, the substance of which is repeatedly expressed in similar words, and which makes reference to the Antichrist as well as the bride of Christ which latter here symbolizes the Church:

"I perceived a voice from heaven which spoke to me: Although everything on earth tends toward the end, yet *the bride of my son* in spite of the fact that she is hard pressed in her children as well as she herself by the messengers of the Son of Perdition as well as by himself, shall by no means be annihilated, however much she may be hard pressed. On the contrary she will rise at the end of time stronger and more vigorous, and more beautiful, and glorious, so that she will meet the embraces of her Loved One in a more graceful and lovely manner, and it is this that the vision which thou seest indicates in a mystical way."

The sensualism of the Abbess Hildegard's prophecy is quite in keeping with the hyperspirituality in which hysterical minds of her type are wont to indulge.

#### CHURCH HYMNS.

The idea that the Church was the bride of Christ has continued down to modern times, and has been cultivated

<sup>7</sup> For further details see Wilhelm Preger's *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik*, pp. 33 f.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Preger, *loc. cit.*, p. 34.

even among Protestants, who have been most reluctant to accept the legend of St. Catharine, because the very idea of attributing a personal bride to Christ seems to give them a shudder, as if it were blasphemy, for it savors too much of mediæval legends, saint-worship, and paganism. Yet the belief in a symbolical bride is still retained as is evidenced by many chorals sung even to-day which celebrate the marriage of the Lamb, or the marriage of the King, the bride being mostly the soul, or the elect, represented by the wise virgins. We quote the following lines:

“The Bridegroom is advancing  
Each hour he draws more nigh.  
Up! Watch and pray, nor slumber,  
At midnight comes the cry.

“The watchers on the mountain  
Proclaim the bridegroom near.  
Go, meet him as he cometh  
With hallelujahs clear.”

In another choral we read:

“Jerusalem the holy  
To purity restored;  
Meek bride, all fair and lowly,  
Go forth to meet thy Lord.

“With love and wonder smitten  
And bowed in guileless shame,  
Upon thy heart be written  
The new mysterious name.”

And a third Church song of the same character begins with this stanza :

“The marriage feast is ready,  
The marriage of the Lamb.  
He calls the faithful children  
Of faithful Abraham.

"Now from the golden portals  
 The sounds of triumph ring;  
 The triumph of the Victor,  
 The marriage of the King."

The Church hymns here quoted are by no means all the songs of this character. There are many more that belong to the same class, for instance: "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh," beginning "Our lamps are trimmed and burning"; and "The Lord is coming by and by," with the refrain: "Will you be ready when the Bridegroom comes?" We mention further, "Wake, awake, the night is flying," and there are several more.

Protestantism has most assuredly gone to the extreme in rejecting romantic similes and fantastic notions, yet the underlying idea is the same as in pre-Christian festivals and, if we discovered in an ancient cuneiform inscription the two lines:

"The triumph of the Victor,  
 The marriage of the King."

our Assyriologists would not hesitate to say that the words have reference to Bel Marduk, who after his victory over the dragon Tiamat enters in triumphal parade to celebrate his marriage with Istar Tsarpanitu.<sup>9</sup>

#### WOMANHOOD SANCTIFIED.

The craving for a religious reverence of womanhood remained even in the age of asceticism, and found its satisfaction in the worship of the *Theotokos*, the mother of God, which is a literal translation of ancient pagan terms, especially the Egyptian *neter mut*. Other titles of Mary, also inherited from pagan antiquity, are "Holy Lady," "Our Lady," "Queen of Heaven," etc.; but in addition the

<sup>9</sup> Schrader, *ibid.*, pp. 371-394.



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Paul Veronese, 1528-1588. In the Church of St. Catharine at Venice.

idea of the Saviour's bride though considerably neglected was never entirely forgotten.

In the imagination of the people, though rarely ever of the clergy, the idea of the Saviour's marriage remained in



THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE.

By Luini, 1460-1530.

a hazy atmosphere of mysticism and finally took a definite shape toward the tenth century by imputing to Jesus a mystical bride who was called Catharine, the "pure one," to indicate that she was an ideal of virginity. The notion of

any true wedlock relation was necessarily excluded according to the prevalent asceticism of Church doctrines, and so in this fairytale atmosphere the legend of a spiritual marriage of Christ assumed a more and more definite shape.

Unquestionably St. Catharine has been selected as the bride of Christ on account of her name, for the idea of the bridal relation between the Saviour and the saved soul is not so unusual as it might appear to a later born generation, whose interest in fantastic imagery has considerably waned.

The idea that the union of Christ with the Church is to be conceived as a marriage relation is based upon old traditions, for in the history of Israel the covenant of God with his people is symbolized in the same way.<sup>10</sup>

#### NUNS.

Mystics of all ages have reveled in the thought of a mystical marriage into which the soul enters with Christ,—a sentiment which is repeatedly and sometimes with great vigor expressed by Angelus Silesius in such lines as these:

“Child, be the bride of God,  
And be thou His alone.  
Thou shalt His sweetheart be,  
As He’s thy lover grown.”

And again:

“The God-enraptured man—  
One only pain hath he ;  
He can not soon enough  
With God his Lover be.”

The idea of the soul as a bride of Christ has found its most expressive form in the institution of celibacy, which

<sup>10</sup> Compare the author’s article “Chastity and Phallic Worship” in *The Open Court*, Vol. XVII, p. 611.



A PAGAN NUN.  
**Portrait bust of a vestal virgin found at Rome, now in the National Museum at Naples.**

assuredly in the case of nuns, is considered as a marriage to the Saviour; and this conception is not purely Christian but finds its prototypes in pre-Christian religions.

As Christianity has its nuns so the pagans had their virgin priestesses whose sanctity was both greatly admired and highly respected by the people of all classes. Among the Homeric hymns is preserved a touching prayer of such a nun of pagan antiquity, and we translate these lines as follows:

“Chaste goddess, hear me that invoke thine ear,  
O thou who nourishest the growing year!  
Grant that thy maid her troth to no one plight  
And scorn all love, yet always take delight  
In converse with the thoughtful grayhaired sage  
Who past his prime has sobered down by age.”

The analogy between the nun’s vow and the marriage of a bride is obvious in many details of the ritual, and the same interpretation was not absent in pagan antiquity where, for instance, the vestal virgins were regarded as matrons and wore six braids, the characteristic hair dress of brides and married women.

In the “Common Office for a Virgin and Martyr,” the First Responsory reads as follows in the English version of the Roman Catholic Breviary:

“Come, Bride of Christ, and take the everlasting crown, which the Lord hath prepared for thee, even for thee who for the love of Him hast shed thy blood, and art entered with angels into His Garden.

“Come, O My chosen one, and I will establish My throne in thee, for the King hath greatly desired thy beauty.

“And thou art entered with Angels into His garden.”

## OLYMPIAN MARRIAGES.

### THE SPIRIT OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

FOR us who have been educated in Christian countries and are strongly under the influence of Protestantism with its antipathy to symbolism, legend, ritual, and other allegorical methods of representing religious ideas, it is very difficult indeed to understand the spirit of pagan devotion. As a rule our opinions concerning paganism are full of unwarranted prejudices. We not only impute to heathens the superstitions that they actually had, but in our imagination we picture their religion as of the grossest kind. We regard them as idolaters who worship images of brass and stone, and think of them as possessing a faith in demons. The reason is not only that the ancient paganism is mostly poetical and mystical, while our own religion is anti-poetical, discarding imagination of any kind, but also that our judgment of the classical gods is influenced by the comments which the Church fathers made upon them, and we are further disturbed in our appreciation of the good features of paganism, not so much by our insufficient knowledge of the facts, as by taking into consideration later conceptions which ought to be ruled out. If we knew less of the later period of Greek civilization we would be more just in our appreciation of the religious spirit of its prime.

The Church fathers have picked out the worst features of pagan worship, have exaggerated them, and have put

a malignant interpretation upon many things which, if properly understood, do not deserve any blame. Moreover, even if the opinion of the Church fathers did not influence



MARRIAGE OF ZEUS AND HERA.  
A Pompeian Fresco.

us, we know paganism only from sources of comparatively late date when a decay of religious life had set in through a fusion of the various religions and had produced a state

of religious anarchy and decadence which finally proved ruinous to the ancient conception, thus necessitating the formation of a new religion which appeared in Christianity. Our historians and students of the Greek and Roman cults are familiar with Lucian, and kindred writers, who are the Ingersolls of antiquity, ridiculing the ancient gods and legends, and having themselves lost the spirit of devotion

MARRIAGE OF ZEUS AND HERA.<sup>1</sup>

Outline drawing of illustration on preceding page.

which animated their ancestors at the time when paganism was suited to the needs of the people. Other authors,

<sup>1</sup> Formerly this picture was interpreted to represent Kronos and Rhea, but Helbig (Wandgemälde No. 114) succeeded in convincing students of classical art that it can only refer to the marriage of Zeus. The bride is attended by Iris. Zeus sits in his grove lightly covered by his veil of clouds. Archæologists find difficulty in explaining the three youths with wreaths on their heads. The easiest explanation seems to be that they represent mankind rejoicing on this festive occasion.

who like Plutarch show much reverence for religion, are too philosophical to represent the naive belief of ancient paganism.

#### THE DIFFICULTIES OF POLYTHEISM.

We must consider that most of the Greek and other legends received their final shape in special localities. As a rule they are closely affiliated to the public worship, to mystery plays which were performed at the temple, and to ceremonies and customs which formed part of the public life of the commonwealth. In one part of Asia Minor



HERA AS A BRIDE.

Detail from the Pompeian Fresco shown on the preceding pages.

where Semitic influences prevail, the god-man is worshiped under the name of Adonis, which means Lord.<sup>2</sup> In the spring Adonis celebrates his marriage with the goddess Astarte, or Istar, or Aphrodite, or as we now commonly

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew אֲדֹנִי.

say, Venus, but when the year draws to a close and vegetation withers, he is wounded in a chase for the wild boar (an animal sacred to him), and the beautiful god dies to indicate the deadened condition of nature during the winter.



ARES AND APHRODITE.

A Pompeian Fresco.

ter. In the spring he re-awakes to new life and again runs the course of his divine career.

In some places and at certain seasons of the year the



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goddess of nature was a virgin, and virginity formed her typical character. Then again in other legends or on other occasions she was celebrated as the bride or the wife of some god. The same divinity could be the protectress at the same time of the arts and sciences, of warfare, of life



PERSEUS RESCUING ANDROMEDA.

and death and resurrection. These differentiations led to personal distinctions, and we have in Greek mythology the virgin Diana, and the virgin Pallas Athene by the side of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, etc., the goddess Hera,

Queen of Heaven and wife of Zeus, and many others. All these figures were once united in one divinity, and we find that in some myths the ancient Babylonian Istar still shows features of all of them, but the more of a literary shape the legends of the gods assumed, the more definite became the figures of the gods and goddesses, and when the inhabitants of one country became acquainted with the legends of another where there were different versions of the same god or goddess, a state of confusion began which was the cause of no little irritation.

In Greece the marriage of Aphrodite was celebrated in some districts with Hephaestos, the Indian Agni and the Roman Vulcan, the god of fire, industry and civilization, while in other districts Ares, the Roman Mars, is looked upon as her spouse, and it can scarcely be doubted that their union was celebrated with public festivals. The underlying ideas were everywhere the same, but the forms which the myth assumed were different, and everything went well so long as the different cities and provinces remained isolated and the various cults and myths were not mixed up. But when this happened the union of Ares with Aphrodite was considered an adultery, and Hephaestos (Vulcan) was represented as the irate husband. Such is the shape of the legend as we find it in Homer, and similar collisions of different myths have become apparent elsewhere. This confusion of different versions of the myths finally produced what may be called infidelity, which spread rapidly in Greece at the period with which we are most familiar. We can not doubt that even at the time of Socrates there was a strong orthodox party at Athens who may have been guided to some extent by piety, but we shall not go far astray if we consider that political as well as financial interests were also at stake. The festivals must have been the source of a rich income, and the hereditary priestly families were very zealous to preserve both their wealth

and their influence. No wonder that even a conservative progress such as was inaugurated by Socrates was hateful to these men, and that they did not hesitate to have him condemned as an infidel and atheist because his philosophy tended to undermine the authority of the established gods.

Considering these changes which have come over the religion of ancient Greece, we must be careful to look upon every myth as a tradition by itself, and in this way we shall appreciate its real religious spirit much better than if we see it in its connection with other myths. We shall find that the main feature of the ancient pagan religion consists in the glorification of the god-man. He wins a triumph or gains a victory of some kind, then celebrates his marriage, but succumbs to death to reappear in a rejuvenated form. The different legends differ in details, sometimes the hero is a god-man, sometimes the main figure is a god, and his son is the divine hero, a man in whom the deity has become incarnated.

As soon as the people of one district became acquainted with the mythology of their neighbors, the process of a religious disintegration began slowly to set in and continued with the spread of an acquaintance with other countries. From time to time priests and poets attempted to reconcile contradictions, to combine different versions and to reconstruct their old traditions in adaptation to a widened horizon, but the final doom of this mythological phase of religion was inevitable. Paganism broke down and made room for a monotheism which, however, preserved the most important feature common to all myths—the idea of the God-man, as a mediator between God and man and as a saviour. Apollo, Dionysus, Asclepius, Theseus, Heracles, etc., are sons of Zeus, all of them divine personalities, who have come to help, to liberate, to heal, to rescue, to ransom mankind from all evil, from death, disease and oppression. When the polytheism of the gods had

become worn out, the underlying idea was purged of its primitive naturalism in the alembic of a dualistic philosophy, finally resulting in an ascetic religion.

## NATIVITY LEGENDS.

Almost all god-men who appear as saviours in India, Asia and in Greece are supposed to have been the object of persecution at the time of their birth. One of the oldest myths representing this typical feature is the story of the



RHEA WELCOMING KRONOS.

birth of Zeus. His father Kronos, a prehistoric deity, later on identified with Chronos, which means "time," was supposed to have been in the habit of swallowing his own children. He was married to the goddess Rhea,<sup>3</sup> also

<sup>3</sup>The ancient goddess Rhea or Cybele must not be confounded with Rea Silvia. The very words are different as appears from the fact that in the former the *e* is short, and in the latter, long. By an unjustified license the

called Cybele, an ancient goddess who must have been a form of the Asiatic Istara, for even in her later forms she is still endowed with many Oriental features, and is a goddess not less of life and resurrection than of death and the darker powers of the nether world. This Rhea was chosen by Kronos as his wife, and when the child was born, she took pity on her offspring and gave her divine husband a stone instead of the infant. In the meantime the little child-god, who was Zeus, himself destined to become the head of the new dynasty of the Greek gods,



RHEA'S DECEPTION.

was brought up in a hiding place. He was suckled by the goat Amalthea on the Island of Crete, and his cries were drowned by the noise of the Corybantes, a feature which continued to be repeated in mystery plays representing the birth of Zeus, which were performed on the island of Crete.

The name Rea Silvia is frequently also spelled in the Greek fashion with an *h* after the *R*. Even Harper's *Latin Dictionary* and *Dictionary of Classical Antiquity* are guilty of this mistake which has crept in at an early date. But Baumeister in *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums* and Preller in his *Römische Mythologie* adopt for the Roman goddess the Roman spelling, *Rea*.

The story of the infancy of Zeus is typical. A similar fate is recorded of the Indian Krishna, and the Krishna myth was transferred both upon Buddha and Christ. A slaughter of innocent babes is incorporated into the history



HERMES SAVING THE CHILD DIONYSUS.

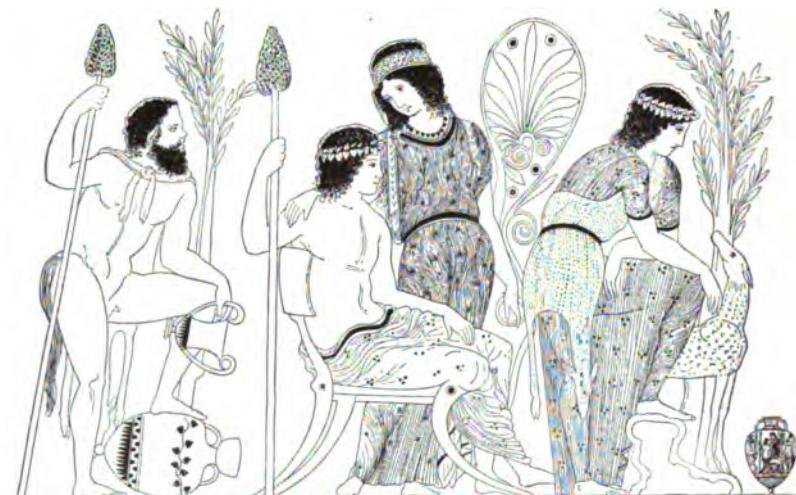
of all three. We meet with kindred traditions everywhere, especially of those who appear on earth in human form, are born in lowly circumstances, among the peasants in a rustic district, sometimes in a stable and usually in a

cave. Dionysus was cradled in a *vannus*, a food measure from which the cattle are fed, and the Christ-child lay in a manger.



MARRIAGE OF DIONYSUS AND ARIADNE.

The underlying idea of all the ancient religions seems to be that the gods are human and that noble men are



MARRIAGE OF DIONYSUS AND ARIADNE.

divine. Nothing that is human is deemed unworthy of a god. So all the gods have their consorts, and the gods

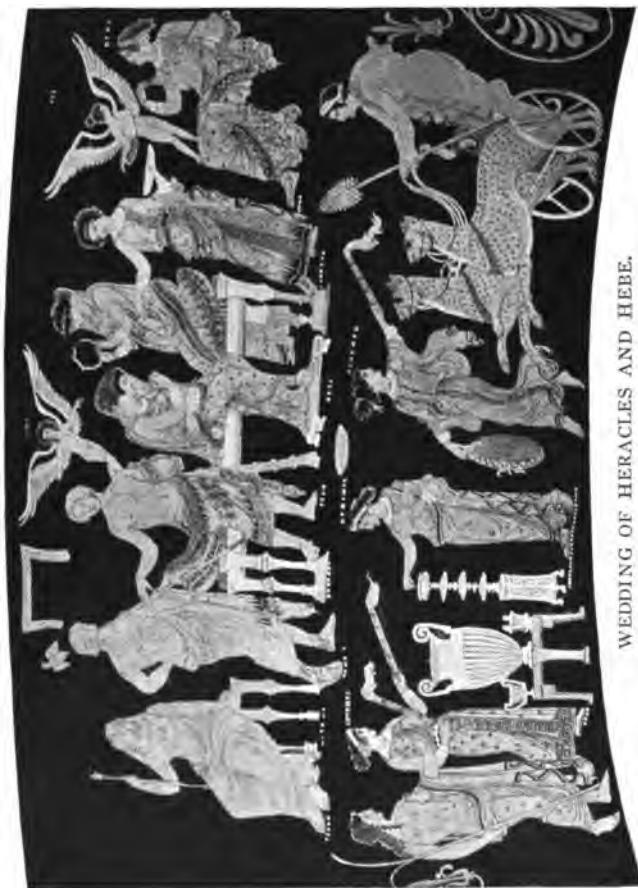
must pass through the ordeal of death as well as men. We are not sufficiently informed about what might be called the dogmas of Greek paganism, but we know that there were many places famous for having a tomb of Zeus, which can only have been funerary shrines attached to Zeus temples, where the annual death of the god was bemoaned with a subsequent celebration of his victorious resurrection.

One of the favorite gods whose name is identified with the idea of joy and exuberance of life is Dionysus, the god of wine, and a representative of the resurrection. He is the son of Zeus and Semele, the latter being presumably a goddess of the moon. Like all saviour gods he was the object of perfidious persecution even before he was born, for Hera in her jealousy suggested to Semele the wish of seeing her lover in his full divinity. Zeus being obliged by his oath to fulfil her wish, granted her request, and so Semele died through her own fault, for no one could see Zeus and live, a feature which is also attributed to Yahveh, the national God of Israel. Since the infant was not quite ready for birth, Zeus took him to himself concealing him in his side, and when the babe was fully matured had him cut out from his thigh. It was on this account that Dionysus was called "the twice born." Like Zeus the Dionysus child had to be brought up in secrecy, and the satyrs and mænads made so much noise that no one could hear the cries of the infant. We know that this incident of a boisterous noise-making crowd remained a characteristic feature of the Bacchus festivals and other kindred performances.

#### MARRIAGES BETWEEN THE RACES OF GODS AND MEN.

Among the art monuments which have come down to us, we have representations of the union between two divine personalities, a god and a goddess such as Ares and

Aphrodite, or Zeus with Hera, Poseidon with Amphitrite, Dionysus with Ariadne, Perseus and Andromeda, etc., both parties being purely divine and superhuman. There are other legends, however, which gradually acquire a greater interest because they are a mixture of human and divine.



WEDDING OF HERACLES AND HEBE.

The human element of the story endears a hero to the people.

In most cases it will be difficult to make a rigid distinction between gods and heroes, because most heroes are humanized gods; for instance in the original myth—now

lost—Heracles must have been the sun-god himself whose wanderings and deeds of valor were related in the story of his twelve labors. But he was more and more humanized until he became a hero whose unusual virtue, strength, and courage had to be explained, and who therefore was deemed to be the offspring of a god. In Greece as elsewhere most of the royal families derived their origin from some god or another.

The story makes Heracles the son of Zeus and Alkmene, and the kings of Argos who derived their descent from him are called Heraclids. When Heracles after his death ascended to Olympus he was married to Hebe, the goddess of eternal youth.

A most beautiful legend is the story of Eros and Psyche, which is of special interest to all as it represents the god of love in his union with the human soul, an idea which occurs in the Christian Church where, too, the soul is represented as the bride of Christ.

We ought to bear in mind that the story of Eros and Psyche is a fairy tale, and it is the only fairy tale which has been saved from the universal deluge that swept away most of the literary traces of antiquity. There is no doubt but that Greece had fairy tales as much as Germany and other modern countries, but there happened to be no Grimm brothers to collect them and put them in book form. We must remember that even in Germany the interest in popular stories or *Märchen* is of a very recent date, and it was actually by an accident that the attention of one of the Grimm brothers was called to an old Hessian woman who knew many old traditions by heart, and she was the last one left, who being illiterate, repeated the stories as she had heard them from her grandmother. If the scholarly philologist had never heard of her, the German *Märchen* would have been lost forever. In Greece the legend of Eros and Psyche is preserved by Apuleius, who really did

not reproduce the real spirit of it for his style is somewhat frivolous, and he does not do justice to the religious spirit that underlies this pretty and tender tale.

We must bear in mind that fairy tales are the last echo of an ancient religion. There was a time when they were myths, and the events related were of the deepest meaning to the listener. Thus the story of Eros and Psyche was really a poetical explanation of the fate of the soul, and involves a promise of immortality of some kind, and we find similar notions pervading almost all other genuine folklore tales. The deities of the ancient myth have been



EROS AND PSYCHE TOGETHER WITH THE GOOD SHEPHERD.  
Ancient Sarcophagus.

reduced to good and bad fairies, and events which take place in the world beyond are localized in this because primitive man did not discriminate between the two worlds; to him both were closely interwoven.

Sometimes it is easy to trace the original myth in a fairy tale. We learn for instance that the good girl who falls into the well and drowns is kindly treated by the fairy Dame Holle or Hulda (who is none other than the Queen of Heaven and the ruler of the world), while the bad girl is punished by her own evil deeds. In other stories, such

as "Little Red Riding Hood," we have greater difficulty in recognizing how the bad wolf swallows her and has to



ORPHEUS AND EURIDICE.

give her up again when she is rescued by the kind hunter. Fairy tales never stop to take into consideration such im-

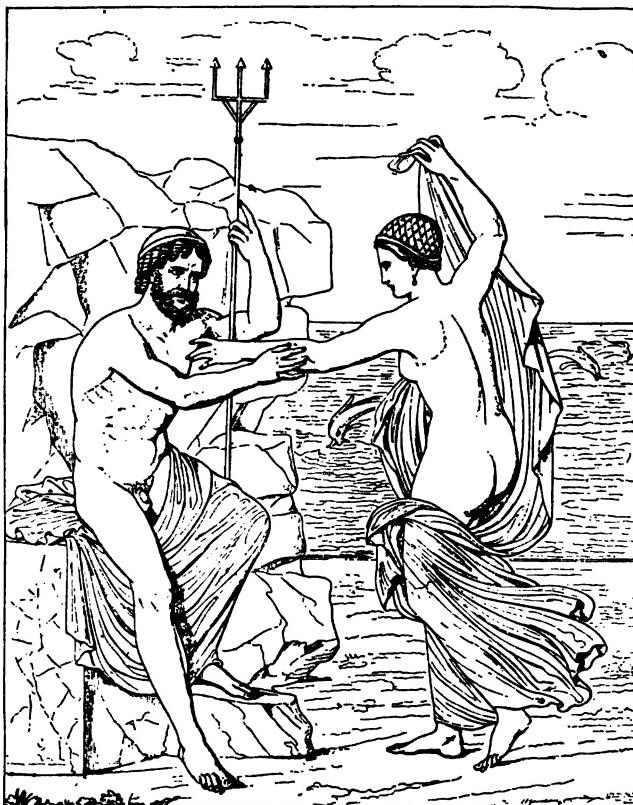
possibilities as that the wolf devours little Red Riding Hood, and the hunter cuts her out of the wolf's stomach, whence she comes forth as young and pretty as she was before. The reason is that here we do not deal with events of this life, but are confronted with facts that represent the wonderful stories of the fate of gods and men in the world to come.

The charming story of Eros and Psyche must have exercised some influence in the formation of early Christianity, for we find the typical group of this loving couple represented side by side with the good shepherd on an ancient sarcophagus.

The same idea that underlies the story of Eros and Psyche is the theme of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. But while it extends to man the hope of immortality it explains why Orpheus must leave his beloved wife in the realms of Hades. She still lives; he found her and would have brought her back had he not forgotten the divine behest not to turn back in his eagerness to see her, and so they remain forever separated.

An interesting myth originated in Nauplia, where a public festival celebrated the marriage of Poseidon, the god of the sea, with Amymone, a nymph who is always represented as a lovely maiden. The local legend (as preserved by Apollonius, II, I, 8) informs us that the founder of Nauplia was deemed to be the son of Poseidon and the nymph Amymone. Amymone went into the country with a pitcher to look for drinking water, and not being able to find a spring lost her way in the woods near the shore, where she came upon a satyr who attacked her. She called for help and Poseidon, the god of the sea, came to her rescue, and having driven away the satyr, fell in love with the beautiful girl and married her. The son of Amymone, Nauplius, was honored in that locality as the tutelary hero of the city, and it is not impossible that this legend

is of purely physical origin. It has been found that the best spring in the neighborhood comes from a mountain in the immediate vicinity of the shore, and its fresh clear waters gush in great plenty directly into the sea. Even in the remote days of antiquity it had become necessary to dam the spring, partly in order to procure the water, and



MARRIAGE OF POSEIDON AND AMYMONE.

partly to protect the fertile shore in its vicinity against sudden inundations. If this was indeed the origin of the myth it would explain why Amymone, the nymph of a fresh water spring is always represented as a lovely maiden in the flower of her youth.

## PELEUS AND THETIS.

Perhaps the favorite representation of a marriage feast between a goddess and a mortal is the story of Thetis, a daughter of Nereus, who like Poseidon was a god of the sea. The ancient myth became so extremely popular because Homer inserted it into the national epic of Greece, and derived from it the cause of the Greek expedition against Troy.

Thetis was the loveliest of the Nereids, and Zeus himself was in love with her, but he was prevented from marrying her because an oracle had foretold that her son

PELEUS WRESTLES WITH THETIS.<sup>4</sup>

would be greater than his father. Accordingly Zeus was frightened because he feared that as he had deposed his father Kronos, so the son of Thetis would in turn deprive him of the government of the world, and he decided that Thetis should not marry any god, but be united with a mortal, and for this honor he selected Peleus of Aegina,

<sup>4</sup> *Thetis as a goddess of the sea possesses the power in common with Proteus of changing her shape. Flames come out from her shoulders and two lions (in the illustration exceedingly small) try to bite Peleus, and Chiron comes to his rescue. While other centaurs are represented as savage he was supposed to be endowed with wisdom, and this attribute is indicated in pictures by representing him with human feet. The defeat of Thetis is shown by the flight of a Nereid here called Dontmeda, and Thetis herself has her feet turned backward.*



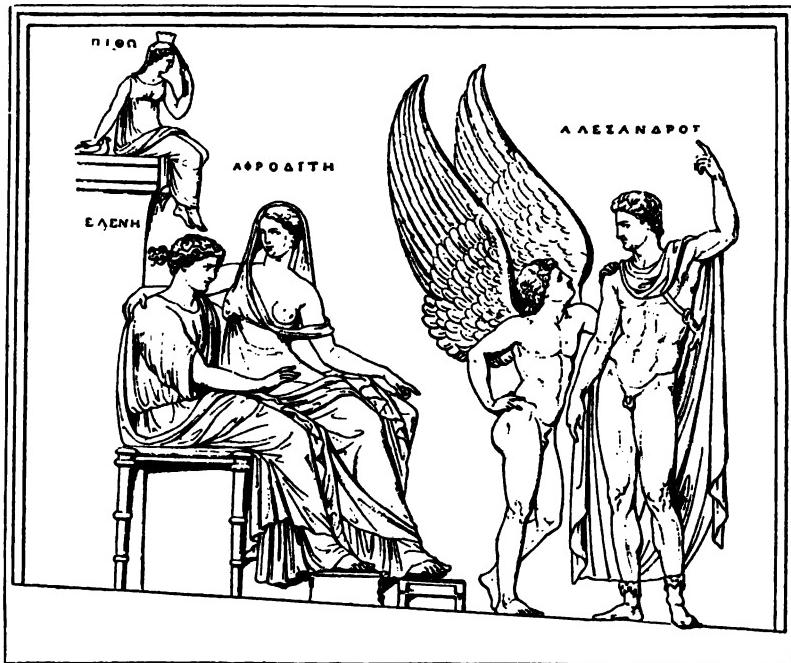
PELEUS AND THETIS.  
Amphora from Rhodes.



Amphora Complete.

king of Thessaly, who was himself the son of Aiacus and the nymph Endeis, the daughter of Chiron.

The version of Homer appears to be of a comparatively recent date, for we have illustrations according to which Peleus has to gain his divine wife by conquest. Thetis resents being married to a mortal and yields only on the condition that he would conquer her. This combat is re-



APHRODITE PERSUADING HELEN.

Pytho, i. e., Persuasion, is seated above Helen while Eros stands by Paris who is also called Alexandros.

peatedly represented in some ancient vase pictures. Later illustrations, however, show that she accepts the engagement with Peleus willingly, and the artist even represents her love of Peleus in her attitude, showing how she courts his arrival as a welcome husband. The scene is represented on the so-called Portland vase, one of the most beautiful pieces of art which has come down to us and is now pre-

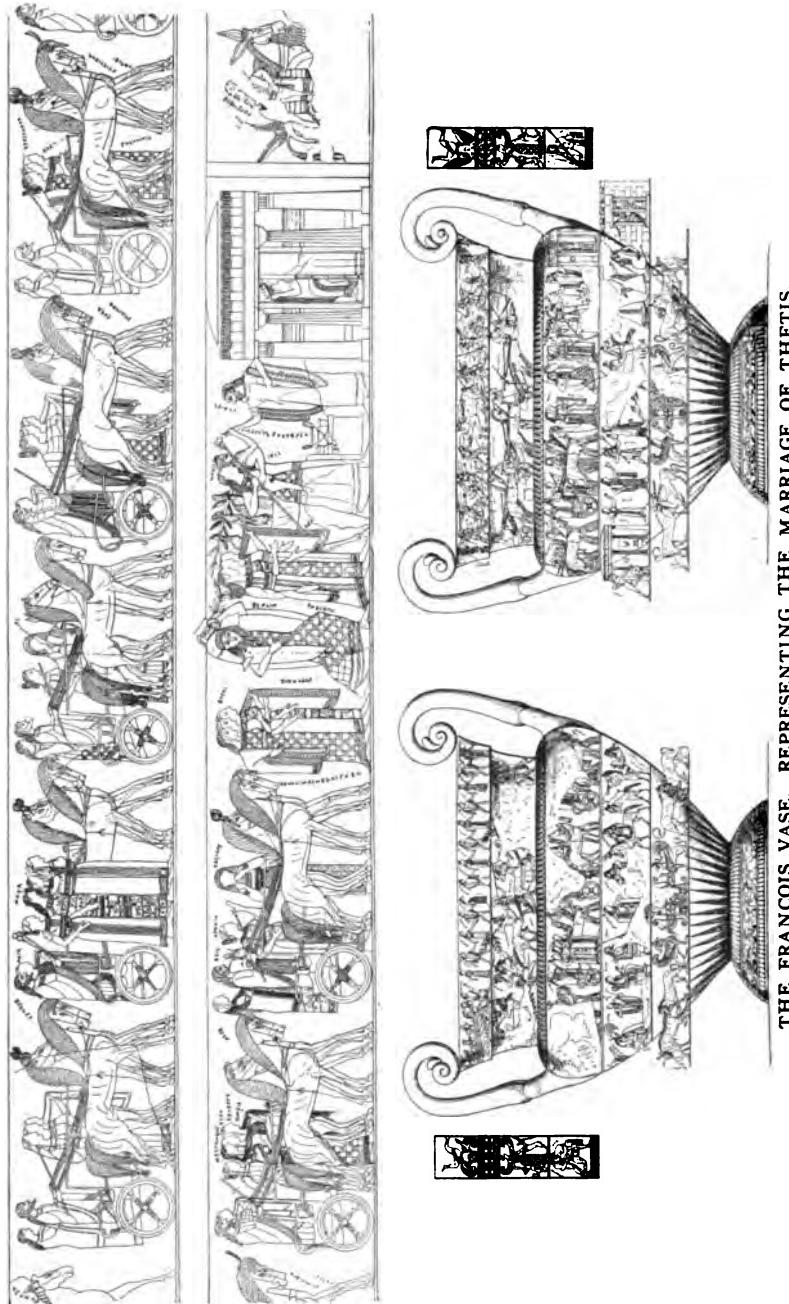
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OLYMPIAN MARRIAGES.

47



THE PORTLAND VASE. REPRESENTING THE MARRIAGE OF THETIS.



THE FRANÇOIS VASE. REPRESENTING THE MARRIAGE OF THETIS.

served in the British Museum. A little cupid flutters above Thetis, and Nereus, her father, watches the arrival of Peleus.

Another vase, commonly called the François vase, also represents the marriage of Thetis, and in two stately rows we see the several gods invited to take part at the festival approaching the temple where they are welcomed by Peleus while the bride waits in the interior of the building.

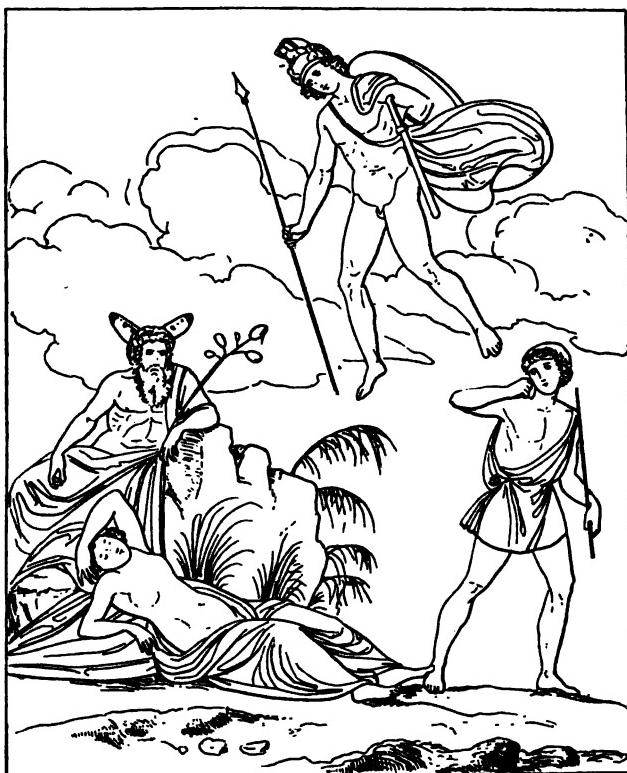
We need scarcely mention the well-known incidents which legend connects with the story. In order to avoid trouble the gods do not invite Eris, the goddess of strife, but she revenges herself for this slight by rolling a golden apple among the goddesses with the inscription "For the most beautiful." This starts a quarrel which Zeus decides through Paris who gives the apple to Aphrodite, and thus offends both Athene and Hera. As a reward Aphrodite promises Paris that for his bride he may have Helen, the wife of Agamemnon, known as the most beautiful woman on earth, and when Paris succeeds by the aid of Aphrodite in eloping with Helen, the Greeks unite in an expedition of revenge to bring her back to Greece.

Helen is a humanized deity as much as Heracles, for Homer speaks of Menelaos to whom she was married as the husband of a goddess, and her name is apparently an archaic form of the word "Selene" which means "the moon."

#### LEGENDS OF ROME.

In the ancient history of Rome Mars is reported to have been the father of Romulus and Remus by a vestal virgin called Rea Silvia, also known as Ilia. According to the popular Roman tradition recorded in the first book of Livy, Rea Silvia (or Ilia) was the daughter of Numitor, the exiled or deposed king of Alba Longa. His younger brother had usurped the throne, and in order to assure himself

against the rights of his elder brother caused the latter's daughter to be made a vestal virgin, and transferred to the temple of Vesta. But here a divine destiny interfered. Mars selected her as his spouse, and the virgin Rea Silvia bore him the twins Romulus and Remus. The rest of the legend is sufficiently known; the irate uncle had the infants



MARS AND REA SILVIA.

exposed in the woods, but a she-wolf nursed them, and this incident has become the emblem of Rome.

The legend of Aphrodite's marriage with Anchises would probably have been forgotten had not Æneas, their son, been adopted as the ancestor of the *Gens Julia*, the imperial family of Rome.

The time when these several legends of the marriage of the gods were really part of the religious life of the people, lies in an almost prehistoric time, and we have no real and direct information concerning their significance, but when we try to reconstruct the significance which these myths had we come to the conclusion that there was a period in which they were dear to the hearts of the people, and that the marriage festivals of these gods and goddesses



THE SHE WOLF OF THE ROMAN CAPITOL.

The two children have been restored but the wolf is ancient and in spite of its archaic crudeness, a remarkable piece of art. Archaeologists assume that it is the same statue that was set up at Rome in the year 295 B.C.

were celebrated in their special localities with genuine devotion and with a natural unsophisticated piety.

When Christianity superseded paganism, it incorporated into its own doctrinal structure several of the most fundamental pagan ideas, among them the doctrines of the god-man as a saviour, of the dying god who rises from death to new life, and also of the immortality of the soul.

No trace of these theories can be found in the religion of ancient Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, while the gentiles clung to them with great tenacity. In Christianity they appear completely transformed not only through the rigid monotheism of its Jewish traditions but also by means of the ascetic tendencies so prominent in the second and third centuries of Church history; and yet the idea of the



VENUS AND ANCHISES.

saviour's marriage, though absolutely obliterated in the dogmatic formation of the Christian belief, was also preserved at least in certain allusions to Christ as the bridegroom, in the report of the marriage of the Lamb in the Revelations of St. John, and in the legend of St. Catharine, the bride of Christ.

## ST. CATHARINE.

### THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

WE have seen that the tradition of the bride of Christ has its ultimate foundation in the myths of pre-Christian saviours; but we noted at the same time that according to the rigidly ascetic traditions of the early Church this marriage was to be a purely spiritual and symbolic one; and that the legend finally crystallized around the name of Catharine, "the pure one," in spite of the incongruity of the age in which the best known saint of this name was supposed to have lived. In the domain of myth as well as legend we move in an atmosphere that is above time and space, and so there is no inconsistency in the fact that St. Catharine of Alexandria lived at the end of the third century, more than two hundred years after the death of Jesus. This discrepancy only helped to denote the entire absence of carnal love, which fact is further emphasized by representing the mystic marriage usually (though not always) as taking place between the Christ child and an adult virgin.

As to the historical facts of St. Catharine's life a critical investigation of ancient records yields no result. There are quite a number of saints that bear the name Catharine, but the bride of Christ was originally St. Catharine of Alexandria. Among other saints of the same name the best known is St. Catharine of Siena, and since the people of Siena did not want to stay behind the Alexandrians,

they too claimed for their saint the honor of a mystic marriage with Christ which has been duly represented in the pictures of the saint's life.



MARRIAGE OF THE CATHARINES.

By Borgognone, about 1524. (National Gallery, London.) The infant Christ holds a ring in each hand and while placing one on the finger of Catharine of Alexandria extends the other ring towards the nun, Catharine of Siena.

ST. CATHARINE OF SIENA.

Though it may appear anachronistic, we will speak first of St. Catharine of Siena, because she is an historical

personality. She was a most striking figure in the Middle Ages and did not fail to impress the people with her extraordinary powers as a saint. She lived 1347-1380, at the



THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHARINE.

By Fra Bartolommeo, 1475-1517. (Louvre.) Because of the nun's habit this can only be Catharine of Siena.

time when the idea of the mystic marriage had already taken deep root in the hearts of the faithful. Being the daughter of a poor dyer, she rose from the humblest sur-

roundings. As early as in her thirteenth year she joined the Dominican order in which solely because of her sanctity and in spite of her lack of culture she took a leading position and played a prominent part even in the historical events of the age. Popular belief naturally fastened upon



ST. CATHARINE OF SIENA

By Lorenzo da San Severino (latter half of the 15th cent.) On the nimbus around the head of the kneeling St. Catharine are the words "Santa Katrina de Sene." Other saints in the picture are Dominic, Augustine, and Demetrius of Spoleto.

her all the honors of her namesake of Alexandria, and her mystic marriage has been pictured in her home, the Dominican convent at Siena, and by Umbrian painters.

The *Pall Mall Magazine* in a series of articles entitled "Half Holidays at the National Gallery," in an attempt to make the subject intelligible to the modern Protestant spirit, makes the following comment upon San Severino's picture:

"The mystic marriage which forms the subject of this picture, where the infant Christ is placing the ring on her finger, suggests the secret of her power. Once when she was fasting and praying, Christ himself appeared to her, she said, and gave her his heart. For love was the keynote of her religion, and the mainspring of her life. In no merely figurative sense did she regard herself as the spouse of Christ, but dwelt upon the bliss, beyond all mortal happiness, which she enjoyed in communion with her Lord. The world has not lost its ladies of the race of St. Catharine, beautiful and pure and holy, who live lives of saintly mercy in the power of human and heavenly love."

It stands to reason that the rivalry of the two Catharines led to acrimonious disputes which in those days were taken more seriously than the later born generation of a scientific age can appreciate. St. Catharine of Alexandria being the older one had a prior and a better claim and could no longer be ousted from her eminent position, so a compromise was made in which the two Catharines were regarded as being both genuine brides of Christ, yet at the same time it was understood that ecclesiastical authority would henceforth tolerate no other saints to aspire for the same honor.

#### ST. CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.

From a purely scientific standpoint St. Catharine of Alexandria is an unhistorical figment, but for all that the legend is quite circumstantial in details. She is reported as being of royal parentage and as having received an un-

usually good education. She is revered by the Church as the patron of philosophy, science and learning, and some



ST. CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.

By Ghirlandajo, 1449-1494. In the Borghese Palace at Rome.

philosophical schools, as for instance the University of Paris, have selected her as their tutelary saint.



ST. CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.  
By Andrea del Sarto, 1486-1531. In the Cathedral at Pisa.

The legend further asserts that Emperor Maxentius, anxious to establish the truth of idolatry, arranged a public debate between her and the most prominent pagan sages, but she defeated them in every way so as to humiliate their authority. Incensed at her success the Emperor first tried to influence her by threats and flattery, but when he saw



THE HOLY FAMILY AND ST. CATHARINE.

By Luca di Signorelli, 1441-1523. In the Pitti Palace at Florence.

that nothing could move her, he ordered her to be tortured on a spiked wheel, and then to be beheaded. The date of her martyrdom has been fixed on November 25, 307.

The oldest reference to St. Catharine is made in the *Menologium Basiliyanum*, a collection of legends compiled

for Emperor Basil II who died in 886. In this she is called Aikaterina, and the report runs as follows:

"The martyr Aikaterina was the daughter of a rich and



THE HOLY FAMILY AND ST. CATHARINE.  
By Giacomo Francia.

noble prince of Alexandria. She was very beautiful, and being at the same time highly talented, she devoted herself

to Greek literature as well as to the study of the languages of all nations, and so she became wise and learned. And it happened that the Greeks held a festival in honor of their idols; and seeing the slaughter of animals, she was so



ST. CATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.  
By Carlo Dolci, 1616-1686. In the Castle of Schönbrunn, Vienna.

greatly moved that she went to the King Maximinus and expostulated with him in these words: 'Why hast thou left the living God to worship lifeless idols?' But the Emperor caused her to be thrown into prison, and to be punished severely. He then ordered fifty orators to be brought, and

bade them to reason with Aikaterina, and confute her, threatening to burn them all if they should fail to overpower her. The orators, however, when they saw themselves vanquished, received baptism, and were burnt forthwith, while she was beheaded."

The report of the *Menologium* has been elaborated in other versions of which we have two in Greek, one by Simeon Metaphrastes (10th century), another by Athanasius. Upon the latter the Latin legend of St. Catharine is founded, from which again all later versions in Italian, French, and Old English have been derived.

#### MIELOT'S ACCOUNT.

We must make special mention of the version of the St. Catharine legend which was made by Jean Mielot at the request of Philip the Good of Burgundy, because in addition to the incidents mentioned above it contains the story of the mystic marriage of St. Catharine to the Saviour which, however, is believed to have been derived from an older source.

Mielot tells us of the marriage of King Costus with Queen Sabinella and the birth of their daughter, Catharine, who from a tender age was most carefully educated in all the arts and sciences. She distinguished herself in all virtues, especially in wisdom and moral purity. King Costus died, and Queen Sabinella retired to Mount Ararat where she was converted to Christianity by Ananias, a godly hermit. When she tried to induce her daughter to adopt the new faith the latter defended paganism with all the arguments of profane science, and refused to be convinced.

Catharine had scarcely reached her eighteenth year when the grandes of the empire sought her hand in marriage, and her mother was anxious to have her choose a good husband who would be a worthy leader and could

protect the kingdom against all its enemies. But Catharine refused all suitors and said: "Bring me a bridegroom who is as learned, as beautiful, as noble, as rich,—in short, is



MADONNA AND SAINTS.  
Artist known as the "Master of St. Severin."

of equal rank with me, and I am ready to accept him for my husband." The story continues in the modernized version of Marius Sepet as follows:

"One evening when mother and daughter lay sleeping

together, the Queen of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, appeared to them surrounded by a great host of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and many other saints, all of whom shone in radiant beauty. The Virgin Mary approached St. Catharine and said to her:

“Look, my daughter! all these are kings, and indeed the greatest in the kingdom of my Son, the Emperor of Glory. I know that thou art still unwedded. If thou



THE VIRGIN ENTHRONED.

Sienese of late fifteenth century. The Virgin is attended by saints among whom is St. Catharine.

wouldst have any of these for a bridegroom choose the one which best pleases thee and I will bring it about that thy desire shall be fulfilled!”

“But St. Catharine answered that she did not wish to marry any one of them. Thereupon Jesus Christ himself, the Emperor of Glory, appeared unto her in the presence of his gentle mother and a countless host of angels. Mary,

the Blessed Virgin, said to Catharine, ‘Wouldst thou choose this one for thy Bridegroom?’

“And when Catharine beheld his beauty, power, and wisdom, she fervently replied, ‘Yea! Him do I desire who-soever he may be,—him and none other.’ But Sabinella, her mother, looked at her with astonishment and said, ‘How darest thou select for thy bridegroom one whom so many kings obey? Be content to choose one of the other nobles for thy husband, for all are great and mighty princes.’

“But the daughter sighed and answered, ‘Dear mother mine! blame me not that I should wish this one for my husband, for I see none here who far surpass myself in all things excepting him alone. Oh, go at once and seek out the Empress, his mother, that she may soften his heart and that he may accept me as his bride, for if I may not be his handmaiden, I will never marry another.’

“The mother went at once to that Lady and offered her daughter to her as bride for her Son, the Emperor. The Queen of Heaven and of the angels then spoke to her well-beloved Son, ‘Dearest Son, desirest thou this maiden for thy bride?’ But he answered, ‘No, my Mother, I desire her not. Rather remove her from thee, for she is not a Christian. I am the King of Christians, and must never have a pagan bride. But if she will be baptized, I give her my word that I shall betroth her soon afterwards by giving her a ring as to my spouse.’

“After this miraculous vision had vanished, Queen Sabinella and her daughter awoke and told each other what they had seen as an actual occurrence. But from this time on Catharine wept constantly and said that she would nevermore find rest until she had received the Emperor of Glory as her husband. Impatient to be baptized she urgently besought her mother to take her at once without delay to the godly hermit, and her request was complied with.

"When they had come together to the hermitage the mother told Ananias privately the vision as related above.



THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHARINE.

From the illuminated text of Miclot's *Vie de Ste. Catherine*, as revised and modernized by M. Sepet.

The pious hermit, suddenly enlightened by our Lord Jesus Christ, called Catharine and her mother and said to them,

"The Emperor whom you have seen was our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Queen was his mother, the glorious Virgin Mary. The hosts which you saw with them were their companions, the angels and saints of Paradise."

"The godly hermit added that if Catharine wished for her bridgroom this Heavenly King whom she saw in her vision, she must needs become a Christian."

The story then proceeds to tell how Catharine became a pious Christian and received baptism at the hands of the saintly Ananias, after which follows an account of the mystic marriage:

"Once, when St. Catharine was praying fervently in her chamber, Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, appeared before her, clad in fine apparel and accompanied by a great throng of angels and saints. As testimony that he accepted St. Catharine for his bride he placed a real ring upon her finger and promised to perform great things for her if she would remain faithful in her love, and when our Lord Jesus Christ had disappeared she knew at once that the vision was to be understood in a spiritual sense. She was completely converted to a great divine love and reverent tenderness toward Jesus Christ, her spouse. From this time forth she often received great tasks of consolation from him, and in order that she might take comfort in him more fully she consecrated all her time and all her study and meditations to prayer and the reading and contemplation of Holy Scripture. As formerly she had studied most zealously and had become learned in vast numbers of volumes of profane science, now, after her conversion she applied herself to the books of Holy Scripture, especially to the writings of the Evangelists, giving to these her attention above all else. She said to herself: 'Alas, sinner that I am, how long have I wasted my time in the darkness of profane books! Oh Catharine, here is the Gospel of thy spouse. Put all thy heart upon its teachings as faithfully

and constantly as thou canst in order that thou mayest attain the light of truth.'



ST. CATHARINE TEACHING.

By Masolino, 1403-1440.

"Reflecting day by day within her own heart, and questioning also day by day the servants of our Lord Jesus

Christ, with whom she loved to speak of him, she became a wonderful teacher of truth. Some say that the ring with which Jesus Christ had wedded her was received and preserved in the City of Alexandria, of Egypt, after the death and passion of Madame St. Catharine."

We have not been able to compare this modernized version with Jean Mielot's manuscript, but we would be interested to know whether the original contains mention of St. Catharine taking cognizance at once that "the vision was to be understood in a spiritual sense." In apparent contradiction to it are other passages which insist on the reality of both the vision and the marriage, in token of which a real ring is left on her finger. According to the ascetic atmosphere of Christian mythology the spirituality of this marriage relation is a matter of course, and so the narrator of the legend impresses his audience with the belief that St. Catharine is not merely the bride of Christ in the sense that any nun may be so considered, but in the special and true meaning of the word.

In some versions of the legend it is claimed that when St. Catharine was tortured on the wheel no blood came from her wounds, but milk, which is characteristic of her as the representation of absolute purity, because according to the Old Testament notion blood is regarded as impure.

According to Mielot St. Catharine addresses Christ in a prayer before her execution, and he answers her from out of a cloud with these words: "Come thou, my much beloved, come my bride! The gate of heaven is open to thee. The dwelling of eternal peace is prepared for thee and awaits thy coming. The glorious hosts of virgins descend with great rejoicing to thee with a crown of victory. Come therefore and be assured that I will graciously grant thee all those favors which thou askest. Yea I promise to extend all help, assistance and comfort which thou askest me also to those who in pious faith revere thy pas-

sion and will call on thee in danger and extremity. I promise to them all these benefits and the grace of heaven."

According to the legend Mt. Sinai became the burial



ST. CATHARINE'S DELIVERANCE.

From Mielot's *Vie de Ste. Catherine* as revised and modernized by M. Sepet.

place of St. Catharine's body, and Marius Sepet claims that the beginning of the public worship of St. Catharine

dates from the discovery of her tomb on Mt. Sinai in the eighth century.

He says:

"The worship of Catharine spread very rapidly among the Christians of the Orient and in the whole Greek Church, whence it penetrated into the Occident and was received also in the Latin Church. This happened before the crusades, for the French National Library contains two manuscripts of the old Latin legend dating from the time of the first crusade. The crusades by encouraging and facilitating pilgrimages to the holy places of the Orient, have undoubtedly contributed much to the spread of the fame and the worship of St. Catharine, whose relics rest in a monastery on Mt. Sinai."

#### THE VERSION OF THE ROMAN BREVIARY.

The Roman Breviary for November 25, the day of our saint, contains the account of St. Catharine's life, as approved by the Church, and reads in the English version as follows:

"This Katharine was a noble maiden of Alexandria, who from her earliest years joined the study of the liberal arts with fervent faith, and in a short while came to such a height of holiness and learning, that when she was eighteen years of age, she prevailed over the chiefest wits. When she saw many diversely tormented and haled to death by command of Maximin, because they professed the Christian religion, she went boldly unto him and rebuked him for his savage cruelty, bringing forward likewise most sage reasons why the faith of Christ should be needful for salvation.

"Maximin marveled at her wisdom, and bade keep her, while he gathered together the most learned men from all quarters and offered them a great reward if they would

confute Katharine and bring her from believing in Christ to worship idols. But the event fell contrariwise, for many



ST. CATHARINE IN A CONTROVERSY.

By Pinturicchio, 1454-1513. In the Appartamento Borgia, Rome.

of the philosophers who came to dispute with her were overcome by the force and skill of her reasoning so that





THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. CATHARINE.  
By Luini, 1470-1535. In Monastero Maggiore at Milan.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. CATHARINE.  
By Luini, 1470-1535. In Monastero Maggiore at Milan.

the love of Christ Jesus was kindled in them, and they were content even to die for his sake. Then did Maximin strive to beguile Katharine with fair words and promises, and when he found it was lost pains, he caused her to be hided, and bruised with leadladen whips, and so cast into prison, and neither meat nor drink given to her for a space of eleven days.

"At that time Maximin's wife and Porphyry the Captain of his host, went to the prison to see the damsel, and at her preaching believed in Jesus Christ, and were after-



ST. CATHARINE'S MARTYRDOM.

From the *Little Pictorial Lives of the Saints*.

wards crowned with martyrdom. Then was Katharine brought out of ward, and a wheel was set, wherein were fastened many and sharp blades, so that her virgin body might thereby be most direfully cut and torn in pieces, but in a little while, as Katharine prayed, this machine was broken in pieces, at the which marvel many believed in Christ. But Maximin was hardened in his godlessness and cruelty, and commanded to behead Katharine. She bravely offered her neck to the stroke and passed away hence to receive

the twain crowns of maidenhood and martyrdom, upon the 25th day of November. Her body was marvelously laid by Angels upon Mount Sinai in Arabia."

Note here that in the Breviary the pagan prince is called Maximin, while in the legend he is identified with Maxentius, who was beaten by Constantine in the battle of Saza Rubra, and after his defeat was drowned in the Tiber. In this way the legend of St. Catharine had become closely affiliated with the final victory of Christianity.

It is impossible to tell how old the legend of the mystic



BURIAL OF ST. CATHARINE.

By Luini, 1470-1535.

marriage may be, but it seems sure that as soon as it appeared on record it spread with great rapidity and became very soon afterwards wellnigh the most popular of all legends. Its popularity kept at its height between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and we may not go astray if we assume that the currency of the unwritten tales prepared the rapid acceptance of the legend when it first made its appearance in literary shape.

The popularity of St. Catharine is proved by the fre-

quent occurrence of the name and also by the belief that she belongs to the most powerful intercessors with God.



ST. CATHARINE LIBERATED BY ANGELS.  
By Masolino, 1403-1440.

Jeanne d'Arc was convinced that she was especially supported by the Virgin Mary, the Archangel Michael, and

the two saints Margaret and Catharine. It is reported that she obtained the miraculous sword which she used



ST. CATHARINE.  
Detail from the above.

in battle from St. Catharine's chapel at Fierbois, after receiving a divine revelation that it was hidden there.



MADONNA AND CHILD, WITH SAINTS BARBARA AND CATHARINE.

By Bernardino Luini, 1470-1535. St. Catharine may be recognized by the wheel which she wears as an ornament while the emblem of St. Barbara is the tower with three windows.

## PAGAN ANALOGIES.

The life of St. Catharine has been made the subject of careful study especially in England, where Mrs. Jameson<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Einenkel have treated the subject with great ability. Both have come to the conclusion to look upon Hypatia as the prototype of St. Catharine's martyrdom. The latter deems the similarities of the life of the saint and her pagan parallel exceedingly striking. He says (pp. xi-xii) :

"Time, place and background exactly agree. Both ladies are of high and noble origin; both deeply, and from their childhood, imbued in the sciences of paganism; both reasoning with philosophers, and, indeed, philosophers themselves; both suffering and dying for their belief. Here, too, in the religious story as in Egyptian history, we have a representative of the worldly power playing an important part in the tragedy, he being in reality the only slayer of the virgin. If we come to speak of the alterations which the plain historical facts have undergone, there is indeed not one of them which might not easily be accounted for, either by the change of religion or by the changes of times."

No doubt the figure of St. Catharine has been formed under the influences of many different traditions of Greece, Egypt, Babylonia and even distant India. We can trace in the story echoes of Buddhist sentiments. We read in the *Menologium Basiliianum* that "seeing the slaughter of animals, St. Catharine was so greatly moved that she went to King Maximinus." This objection to bloody sacrifices was not uncommon among the philosophical critics of paganism long before Christianity had become a power. Though the Christians had adopted the argument and used it against the pagan mode of worship, they did not

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred and Legendary Art*, II, 87-88.



ST. CATHARINE.  
By **Fra Angelico**, 1387-1455.

make it as prominent as it appears in the Catharine legend. The God of the Christians was also the God of the Jews, and as such he had demanded bloody sacrifices as much as any of the pagan gods. In fact, if we can trust historical reports, the temple of Jerusalem must have reeked with the blood of slaughtered bullocks and other cattle which the pious Jews in their zealous devotion offered in uncounted numbers.

There were Oriental philosophers in Alexandria who had been under Jain and Buddhist influences and denied the righteousness of the ceremonial shedding of blood. But we need not even go so far as distant India to explain the feeling that revolted against bloody sacrifice. The Neoplatonists had given frequent utterance to the same sentiment, and the great religious leader, Apollonius of Tyana<sup>2</sup> left no opportunity unimproved to preach against the impious custom of bloody sacrifice.

Whatever be the historical source of the St. Catharine legend we have here a tradition which is ultimately based upon a myth of a solar bride. It is certainly not a mere accident that the emblem of St. Catharine is the wheel which from time immemorial has been the symbol of the sun, and we must remember that the ancient punishment of an execution on the wheel was originally meant as a sacrifice to the sun-god.

Does Fra Angelico perhaps follow an ancient tradition when he represents St. Catharine clothed in a garment covered with the stars of the heavens? The story of the bride of Christ certainly testifies to the tenacity of religious ideas, and perhaps also to the truth that even in different religions, pagan as well as Christian, the same ideas and the same allegories turn up again and again, as if they were the permanent element in all historical changes.

<sup>2</sup>See "Apollonius of Tyana," by T. Whittaker, *Monist*, XIII, 161.

## ST. CATHARINE IN ART.

### POETIC SYMBOLISM.

THE idea of the mystic marriage of Christ has never found friends among Protestants, and the legend of St. Catharine has been almost disregarded since the Re-



THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHARINE.

By David (Gheeraert), d. 1523. In the National Gallery at London. On the right are St. Barbara with a book and Mary Magdalene with ointment, and on the left the donor, Richard van der Capelle.

formation which seems to have acted as a blight upon its romanticism and had more influence upon the Roman



THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHARINE.

By Hans Memling, d. 1494. (Louvre.) St. Barbara is represented with a book, and in the background are Cecilia, Agnes and other saints.

Catholic Church than is commonly conceded. Even Roman Catholic artists became too sober—we might almost say



ST. CATHARINE.

By Raphael, 1483-1520. In the National Gallery at London.

too prosaic—and too timid to revert to this subject which formerly had been so very popular, for previous to the

Reformation it had furnished the inspiration of a number of charming and most beautiful pictures which are and will remain cherished by all lovers of art, Protestants not excepted.

In fact there is scarcely any great artist of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who has not painted a St. Catharine or a mystic marriage. We will here mention only Raphael, Correggio, Ghirlandajo, Luini, Fra Angelico,



ST. CATHARINE WITH THE EVANGELISTS MATTHEW AND JOHN.

Ascribed to Master Stephen (probably Stephen Lothener). Presented by Queen Victoria in 1863 in fulfilment of the wishes of the late Prince Consort, to the National Gallery, London.

Murillo, Veronese, Tintoretto, Fra Bartolommeo, Titian, and among the Flemish painters, Memling.

The more liberal we grow, the less shall we scorn such art productions from the religious standpoint, for we have acquired breadth enough to find in them the expression of a tender and poetical sentiment that is frequently absent

in the cold and unimaginative rationalism of the Reformation.

Ecclesiastical art represents St. Catharine with a spiked wheel commemorative of her martyrdom, which is consequently called St. Catharine's wheel. The arrangement of the spikes strongly suggests the rays of the sun.

Frequently St. Catharine carries in her hand a palm



ST. CATHARINE.

By Pinturicchio, 1454-1513. National Gallery, London.

branch or books, both in token of the eminent position which she holds on account of her great learning. The most celebrated illustrations of her life are frescoes by Avanzi and Altichieri in the church of St. George at Padua, completed in 1377, and by Masaccio in the church of St. Clement at Rome made in the fifteenth century.

Not only are there many altarpieces in the churches of

Catholics (and even some in Protestant countries) which have come down from pre-Reformation times, but our art galleries also contain many valuable pictures of St. Catharine including representations of her mystic marriage. All of them bear witness to the tenderness with which the idea was cherished at that time all over Catholic Christendom.

#### THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF LONDON.

The London National Gallery contains at least six St. Catharines, one among them (No. 168) is the famous St.



ST. CATHARINE.

By Carlo Crivelli, 1430-1493.  
In the National Gallery, London.

By an unknown artist of the  
Umbrian School. National Gal-  
lery, London.

Catharine of Alexandria by Raphael. Another (No. 249) is by Lorenzo da San Severino,<sup>1</sup> a mystic marriage of St.

<sup>1</sup>This picture and the one next mentioned are reproduced on pages 54 and 56 of this book.

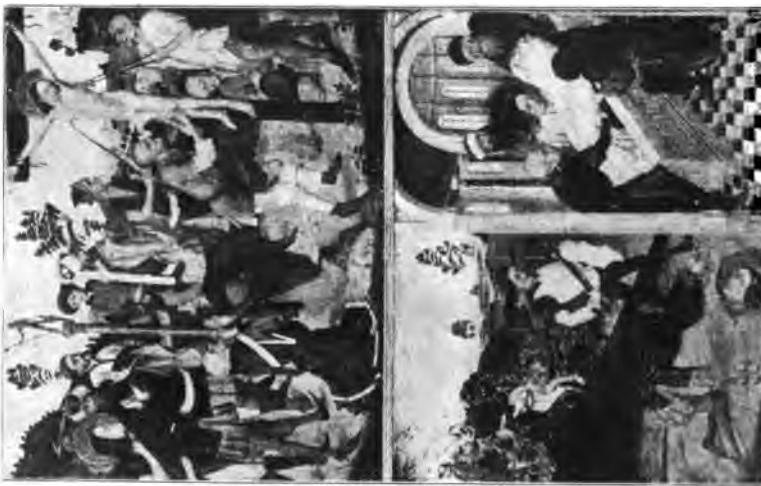
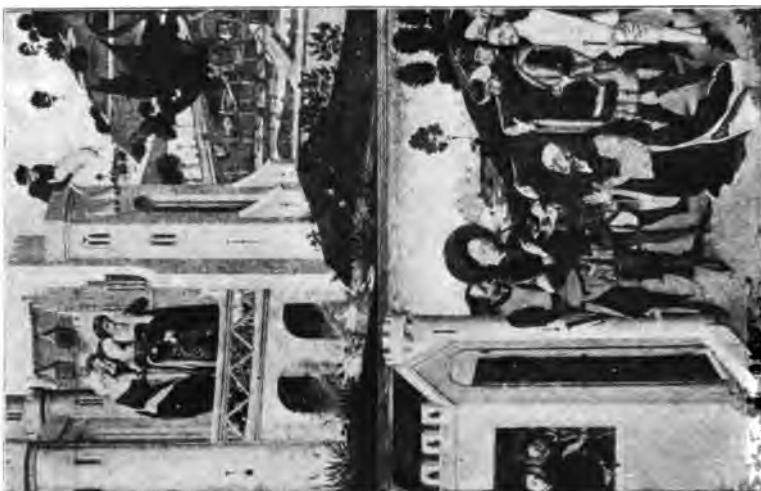
Catharine of Siena, and the "Two Catharines" by Ambrogio Borgognone (No. 298).



SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ST. CATHARINE.  
Artist known as the "Master of the St. George Legends."

A painting by Pinturicchio (also in the National Gallery) shows the donor kneeling with folded hands before our saint who listens to his prayer with a truly royal grace.

Two more pictures of St. Catharine in the National Gallery of London are the one by Carlo Crivello,<sup>2</sup> the other by an unknown master of the Umbrian school.



SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ST. CATHARINE.  
Artist known as the "Master of the St. George Legends."

<sup>2</sup>A copy of this picture in the church of St. Giobbe at Venice bears the name Previtali, which, considering the fact that they are apparently made by the same hand, is strong evidence that the artist worked under two names.

## ARTISTS OF THE GERMAN SCHOOLS.

The Art Gallery of Cologne possesses perhaps the richest collection of St. Catharines. Among them is a triptych,



THE HOLY FAMILY AND SAINTS CATHARINE AND BARBARA.  
Artist known as "Master of the Holy Family" (*Sippe*). In the Walraf-Richartz Museum at Cologne.

an altarpiece consisting of a center with two wings, which contains a series of twelve illustrations of the life of St. Catharine by an unknown painter commonly designated



ST. CATHARINE.  
Detail from the above.

as the Master of the St. George Legends. We see that even in this subject the artist remains faithful to his favorite topic, for he introduces the motive of the dragon into the Catharine legend.



MADONNA AND CHILD TOGETHER WITH FEMALE SAINTS AND DONOR'S FAMILY.

Artist known as "Master of the Life of Mary."

Considering the fact that in Northern Germany and in the Netherlands the Reformation spread with great rapid-

ity in the first half of the sixteenth century, and that with it every trace of a belief in a mystic marriage was thoroughly wiped out together with all saint-veneration or reverence for legendary lore, we are astonished to find a great number of Catharine pictures in these very countries.

We call special attention to a picture painted by an artist called *Meister der heiligen Sippe* (i. e., the master



THE GLORIFICATION OF THE VIRGIN.  
Artist unknown. In the hospital at Cues.

of the holy family) who represents the mystic marriage like a German family scene in which the bride is a typical German noblewoman of the time, well educated, with an expression of simple-hearted devotion, and dressed with painstaking elegance.

Another artist, known as the Master of the Life of Mary, places the scene of the mystic marriage in a grace-

fully blossoming arbor, the foliage of which is so ideally sparse as to indicate very early springtime. Here too the features of all the saints are genuinely Teutonic, exhibiting the self-satisfied complacency of wealthy patricians, while



MADONNA AND SAINTS.

By "Master Wilhelm." In the Berlin Museum.

the modest donors with their austere faces are crowded into the corners.

In a painting called "The Glorification of the Virgin"

an unknown master of the German school presents us with a general view of the Christian world-conception of his age. In the heavens appears the Trinity. In the center



ST. CATHARINE.

By "Master Wilhelm." Detail  
from the Madonna of the Bean  
Blossom.



By Jan Van Eyck, 1386-1440.  
Kgl. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

God the Son is represented as the Christ-child in the arms of his mother, while on her right is God the Father and on her left the Holy Ghost. Below on earth the male saints



SAINTS CATHARINE, HUBERT, AND QUIRINUS.

By Stephen Lothener (1450?) in the Munich Gallery.

are headed by John the Baptist, while St. Catharine takes the leadership of the female saints.



ST. CATHARINE.

By an artist of the "Westphalian School." In the Wallraf-Richartz Museum at Cologne.

Artist known as "Master of the Life of Mary." In the Wallraf - Richartz Museum at Cologne.

In further evidence of the extraordinary popularity of St. Catharine in Germany we reproduce two pictures of

Master Wilhelm, who may have used the same model for both, showing her once in profile and then full face. Yet we shall find that all his saints possess a great family likeness in that they possess extremely small hands and un-



ST. CATHARINE.

Engraved by Schongauer, 1420-1488.

usually large foreheads. Of a similar type, though not quite so pronounced, are the St. Catharines by Stephen Lothener and by the Master of the Life of Mary, while an

unknown artist of the Westphalian school endows his St. Catharine with hands of normal size.

Martin Schongauer flourished on the Upper Rhine through the greater part of the fifteenth century. He was



ST. CATHARINE.  
Engraved by Schongauer, 1420-1488.

a very important artist for his time, although very few of his paintings now remain and they are not nearly so good as his engravings, on account of which he may justly

be called the father of engraving in Germany. His power of invention was good and his execution was animated and



ST. CATHARINE'S DELIVERANCE.  
Engraving by Dürer, 1471-1528.

spirited. His "Temptation of St. Anthony" is said to have served Michael Angelo as a model, and several others of

his works excel anything done at the same time by his German contemporaries. Two engravings of St. Catharine from the hand of this pioneer artist have come down to us, which show great delicacy of taste and refinement of feeling. Although varying somewhat in details they are almost identical in general conception giving the impression at first glance that they are two different views of the same figure.

#### A MEMLING BREVIARY.

In the National Museum of Munich we find (in Hall VII, No. 802) a breviary, most beautifully illuminated by an artist of the Hans Memling school, made for Queen Jeanne of Valladolid, mother of Charles V, which by inheritance came into the possession of her granddaughter Duchess Anne of Bavaria, wife of Duke Albrecht V. It remained in possession of the ducal family of Bavaria until it was deposited in the National Museum of Munich.

In this breviary we find the legend of St. Catharine with her portrait and illustrations of the main incidents of her life. Like a Flemish princess, she is blue-eyed and blond-haired, and richly dressed. Her blue bodice, adorned with gold brocade and costly pearls is contrasted by her long white sleeves and pink mantle, while her forehead is decked with a diadem. In one hand she holds a sword and in the other a book in which she seems to be reading.

Another breviary preserved in the same place contains a similar picture which appeals to us as even more beautiful and dignified than the former. It comes from the same school, Memling. The attitude of the saint is more natural and her face more regular. She stands likewise in a window of Gothic architecture, through which is seen a purely ornamental landscape. Her emblem, the wheel, is simply indicated as an ornament on her bodice. There is no



ST. CATHARINE.

In a Memling Breviary. Collection of Munich, Hall 7, No. 862.



ST. CATHARINE.  
In a Memling Breviary.



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A PAGE OF ILLUMINATED TEXT.  
 Referring to the story of St. Catharine. In a Memling Breviary.

affectation in the way she holds the sword and the book, nor in the manner in which she is reading.

The artistic work of these books is very delicate, but it is more interesting to notice the pious aspect and religious reverence which has guided the artist's hand. Apparently these pictures were made in an age when the legend was still naively believed and when the artist endeavored to picture faithfully the saint who was deemed worthy to be the bride of Christ.

## CONCLUSION.

THE story of the Bride of Christ seems to have been forgotten. It is a legend that has been practically discarded and yet it possesses an unusual attraction. It is the last echo of a very ancient belief, the most romantic episode of mythic lore—the marriage of a god and the homage paid to his bride.

It is true that this idea comes down to us from pagan sources, but is there any feature in Christianity which has not its pagan prototypes? Are not the ideas of a god-man, of a god incarnation, of a saviour, of atonement for sin through sacrifice, yea through the innocent blood of the god-man himself, his martyr death and his final triumph after his restoration to life, traits in the pre-Christian religions of Egypt, Greece, Babylon and India? Are not Osiris, Heracles and other Grecian heroes, Tammuz, Bel, Krishna, and all the innumerable god-incarnations of the gentiles, prototypes of Christ, and has not the feature of their marriage also its parallel in the traditions, canonical and extracanonical, of Christianity?

The ideal of a god-man in religion is based upon a psychological need deeply rooted in man's soul. It is man's inborn tendency toward hero-worship. We admire great men, we praise them in song, we exalt them and keep them before our eyes as examples worthy of imitation. This hero-worship is the quintessence of that peculiar type of religious devotion which in former ages begot the myth-

ology of pagan saviours, and in the age of Christianity brought forth the ideal of Christ, the god-man.

Man is not complete in himself. True humanity consists in man and woman. In fact manhood finds its perfection only in the family and so we have in the mythology of all religions the trinity of father, mother, child, and the hero god is rarely pictured without touching upon the relation to the heroine, his marriage to a type of ideal womanhood. This feature, however, has been gradually dropped out of sight in Christianity because the origin of Christianity coincides with a dualistic movement which is decidedly hostile not only to nature and everything natural (for it seeks the supernatural), but also and especially to the most human in man, the love between man and woman. For this reason the pagan trinity ideal of God-Father, God-Mother and God-Child, has been changed into the less human relation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

The Koran still knows of Mary as one person of the Trinity, which proves that in the days of its authorship another conception of the Christian Trinity was prevalent, and a stray notice in heretical gospels preserves a similar conception as evidenced in the uncanonical word of Christ, "My Mother, the Holy Ghost." Though this conception was ruled out by the dualistic interpretation of early Christianity, it yet asserted itself in the legend, more or less recognized by the Church, of the bride of Christ, as well as in the worship of Mary which practically came to be of equal rank with the worship of Christ and the worship of God. Ever since the Reformation made its influence felt in the Christian world, and there is no question that even the Greek and Roman Churches were deeply affected by it, the romantic element of religion has been neglected and with it the worship of the divine in the shape of woman has become almost entirely obliterated. The an-

cient Mariolatry is weakened even in the Catholic Church, or at any rate it is no longer so popular among the people as it was in the Middle Ages and the legend of St. Catherine has suffered in proportion.

The Protestant spirit wants religion pure and simple,—religion without romance, without mythology, if possible without ritual and symbol. Some Protestant churches go so far as to deny art admittance to sacred worship. Pictures as well as statues, incense, symbols, rituals, are scorned as pagan, and God is conceived in the abstractness of the idea more than after the fashion of mystical intuition. And yet, even the Protestant conception of God remains an allegory. God is conceived as a Father, as a great benevolent *seigneur* who with parental care watches over all his children and embraces them in his tender love. Now since even this conception can no longer be taken literally but is a figure of speech just as Christian legends are pious fairy tales, so we learn to appreciate again the romantic poetry of saint worship and the various allegorical methods employed by almost all the religions of the past.

Mankind has had the same experience with reference to the mythology of Greek antiquity. So long as there was danger of the gods being still believed in literally, there was a bitter hostility toward the ancient mythology, but in the days of the Renaissance, when there was no possibility of a return to paganism, the interest in antique traditions, the love of pagan art and the admiration of classical ideas became firmly re-established, and the recognition of their value is not likely ever to be shaken again.

We have at last become just toward a vanquished enemy. At the present time we need no longer fear that the legend of the bride of Christ will ever be taken seriously or in a literal sense. Even orthodox members of the Church

will not treat it as history but as poetry, as legend, as Christian myth. And so it is natural that our interest in the subject will be keener and deeper. At least this is the author's own experience and from this sentiment the present book has sprung.











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